

## **Staff Clinician Professional Levels Guidance**

The Intramural Research Program (IRP) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognizes the important roles that Staff Clinicians play in the success of our clinical research program in each Institute/Center (IC), their unique and highly specialized clinical skills and the significant contributions that have been made by this cadre of physicians. In order to more fully reflect the varied and vital roles that our physician-scientists have, such as providing highly specialized clinical care or leading complex patient-care teams to carry out complicated research trials, the IRP has created new position levels:

Assistant Research Physician, Associate Research Physician, and Senior Research Physician. While the official NIH Intramural Professional Designation (IPD) will remain “Staff Clinician,” these alternative IRP titles may be used, if preferred, in professional correspondence, websites, and CVs. Advancement to Associate and Senior Research Physician will require formal endorsement by the Clinical and Scientific Directors. While these titles are listed in the context of Physicians, it is to be understood that alternative appropriate titles may be substituted for Physician, including Dentist, Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Clinician, etc., as applicable.

### Assistant Research Physician

Staff Clinicians approved for the level “Assistant Research Physician” are individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in clinical practice, including attention to patient safety, clinical research or education and who possess the ability to integrate teaching and scholarship on an ongoing basis into the practice or learning of medicine and science. This title will be granted with the expectation and understanding that the designee will pursue a trajectory of accomplishments that could lead to the subsequent attainment of Associate Research Physician and the ultimate goal of Senior Research Physician.

### Associate Research Physician

Staff Clinicians approved for the level, “Associate Research Physician” are individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in clinical practice, clinical research or education and who possess the ability to integrate teaching and scholarship on an ongoing basis into the practice or learning of medicine and science. At this level, the physician is expected to have taken on leadership roles in the IRP; be knowledgeable in the development and conduct of clinical research trials, as demonstrated through successful track record of implementing trials, or completed training in areas related to human subjects research; and be active in the professional community. This position is envisioned as equivalent to an “Associate Professor” in the academic clinical educator track in outside academic health centers.

Among the factors that will be considered, but are not all necessary for the level of Associate Research Physician are:

- major role(s) within a quality clinical research program;
- scholarly achievements in scientific publication;
- delivery of quality patient care with attention to patient safety over an extended period of time to protocol participants as an Attending Physician or through a consult or diagnostic service;
- serving as a resource on the conduct of human subject research trials, including service on an IRB;
- major role(s) in the development and execution of multiple high quality clinical research protocols;

- leadership role(s) in the IC or NIH (e.g., IC Protocol Concept Reviewer, service on IC national search committees; or other task forces or committees)
- major role(s) in professional community activities such as national meetings, professional organizations, and extramural collaborations;
- major role(s) in the training and mentoring of clinical staff; or
- receipt of NIH or IC award(s)
- additional exceptional factors that are added by and reflect the special character of the IC with the approval of the DDICR.

### Senior Research Physician

Staff Clinicians approved for the level “Senior Research Physician” will be considered national or international leaders in their field. At this level, physicians are expected to be active leaders in the IC (e.g. IC Advisory Board, IC Protocol Concept Review chairperson, service on IC national search committees, branch Fellowship Program Director/Assistant Director); to actively mentor other clinical staff and/or to develop and serve as PI of one or more clinical research trials. These individuals will have stature such that they are called upon as experts by outside institutions, are invited to give seminars at research institutions and national meetings, hold important roles in professional organizations, or serve on grant study sections. This position is envisioned as equivalent to that of a “Full Professor” in the academic clinical educator track in outside academic health centers.

In addition to the factors considered for Associate Research Physician as listed above, the following additional factors will be considered for advancement to this level:

- have received an “Outstanding” rating on the two most recent Quad Reviews/BSC Reviews;
- be seen as an expert in the field, held in high regard by peers, as evidenced by such factors as being consulted by others inside and outside of NIH, invitations to speak at important professional meetings, receipt of national/international awards, or leadership role(s) outside of NIH in extramural community, or high quality clinical research publications.

### **Guidance for Request for Conferral of Status**

A request addressing the criteria should be submitted through the Lab/Branch Chief or Deputy Chief to an IC Clinical Review Panel (CRP). The CRP will make a recommendation to the IC Scientific and Clinical Directors. Review of Senior Research Physician requests will require additional endorsement by the IC Senior Leadership Team. A Staff Clinician’s supervisor, with the support of the Branch Chief, may request consideration of advancement as part of the quadrennial review process, with all supporting documentation, or may make the request independent of the quad review. Recognition as Assistant Research Physician must be approved by the CRP. Recognition as Associate Research Physician or Senior Research Physician must be specifically approved by the CRP, the Clinical and Scientific Directors, and signed off on by the Deputy Director for Intramural Clinical Research (DDICR). Without specific approval of this status, it is not conferred. If a Staff Clinician is not recognized by this process and disputes that decision, the Staff Clinician may consult with the DDICR to seek an “alternate

dispute resolution,” to determine if there is a procedural error resulting in the decision by the IC not to advance the Staff Clinician.

The request for Staff Clinician recognition must include:

- a memo addressing the criteria;
- an updated CV and bibliography;
- Reference letters:
  - 1) Assistant Research Physician - Three letters of reference from collaborators or non-collaborators.
  - 2) Associate Research Physician - Three letters of reference from individuals who are not recent collaborators (NOTE: A recent collaborator is one who has made an intellectual contribution regarding the planning and conduct of experiments, clinical trials or publications within the last three years, with the exception of one who has merely shared reagents, patient samples or whose name appeared on a common publication only as a result of consortia participation). Letters may be requested by the lab/branch using an IC reference letter template.
  - 3) Senior Research Physician - Three reference letters from non-collaborators outside NIH. Letters must be solicited by the IC. The Lab/Branch should provide at least five suggested names with contact information.

External Candidates:

A Staff Clinician being hired from outside of NIH may be appointed as an Assistant Research Physician, Associate Research Physician, or Senior Research Physician at the request of the supervisor with support of the IC Branch Chief (if different). The IC Clinical Review Panel will review these requests on an ad hoc basis.